

Solving county deficit will take hard work

To the Editor:

The financial picture of the Sullivan County government is not a pretty one and unfortunately, unless tough decisions are made it will get worse. It was formally proposed by the county delegation and the county commissioners this week that there would be a substantial tax increase in order to float the county for another year. Despite the huge increase of 32 percent on your county tax bill for this coming year, the county continues to overspend to the tune of \$2.3 million.

Spending considerably more than what you have is quite a habit of the county. For example, in nine of the last 12 years, the county has operated the nursing home on a deficit. In seven of those nine years, the deficit has been greater than \$1.5 million. In the last three years alone, the deficit has been more than \$6.1 million. Folks, this is serious money.

Where is the difference made up? You got it. You and me. We are asked to pony up every year and bail the county out of debt. I don't like a 32 percent tax increase but I could deal with it if I knew it was a one-time expense and the deficit would be paid, over and done. We are not so lucky. Not only are we told to bail the county out of considerable debt

this year, we are told there is no plan in sight to fix what is causing the deficit in the first place. This will go on and on and on.

I've had enough. I feel it is time for all of us to reach out to the county commissioners (two who are up for re-election) and the entire county delegation (all are up for re-election, one is running for state senator) and let them know the county credit card has reached its credit limit and the blank checks are beginning to bounce. We need to do this before the budget is finalized for this year.

There is absolutely no way a city manager or councilor would ever survive a financial fiasco of this magnitude. Why is it allowed to happen with the county? My answer ... how many of you until reading this letter or recent articles knew the situation was this bad? The county has been allowed to operate in near obscurity and that needs to stop now.

Please join me in letting our delegation members and commissioners know that the days of deficit spending are over and we will no longer pay the burden of their financial ineptitude. If they do not hear the message loud and clear, I guarantee you the county credit card will continue to burn and we will be expected to pay the bills.

Jeffrey Goff

Claremont City Councilor